

NEWSLETTER - July 2020

MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR



Welcome to our latest Newsletter. Judging by the response to our last edition, many of you were impressed by our determination to keep going through the current crisis. Thanks for your good wishes, all at BW appreciate them. What has also been particularly pleasing is the receipt of several monetary donations, very kind.

A number of ongoing matters are covered in the Newsletter, especially the issue of Racecourse Approach, which I feel will feature large over the coming months. Recently the Aireborough Neighbourhood Forum challenged the whole Leeds Site Allocation Inquiry decision around the allocation of Green Belt land and won their case in the [High Court](#), although the Judge is yet to hand down his decision. They are now challenging all Green Belt allocations in Leeds on the grounds the Inquiry decision was wrong in Law. Although the Racecourse Approach site is not Green Belt, the challenge by the Aireborough could have major ramifications for Leeds, so BW will be keeping a close watch on this.

BW aims to challenge the conditions imposed on the Planning Application for Racecourse Approach when the matter progresses. To do so we will need substantial funds to employ experts to support our case. The Aireborough Neighbourhood Forum actually raised in the order of £60,000 to fund their case, so this gives an indication of the type of funds we may need. If you can contribute it would be appreciated. Details of how to contribute are shown in the Newsletter.

At BW we are moving forward, even via Zoom! Personally I am looking forward to meeting colleagues face to face again before too much longer. In the meantime, thanks for reading, stay safe.

Roger Owen

Chair - Better Wetherby Partnership

RACECOURSE APPROACH UPDATE

Thank you to all of you, from far and wide, who have submitted further objections to this planning application. We need yet more objections to demonstrate that Wetherby does care about the imposition of 800 (soon to be 1,100) houses, on our doorstep. This is a massive development that will have very negative consequences for Wetherby so, if you have not already done so, please think about the implications for the Town and record your objection. Please also consider asking your friends, neighbours and adult children to object. You do not have to live in Wetherby to submit an objection.

Our [May newsletter](#) included a list of reasons for objection, there is also a selection of submitted objections on [our website](#). In addition to those, an additional point of objection to consider arises from the following statement in the approved Wetherby Neighbourhood Plan:

“Proposals for new housing in Wetherby should ensure that the new homes are well integrated with the existing town. .. The aim is to ensure that the town continues to feel ‘compact’. This will ensure that residents in the new homes feel integrated with the existing community.” Clearly the Racecourse Approach application fails abysmally to meet this criteria.

A full list of documents related to this case can be found at [Leeds CC, Racecourse Approach](#), you can also [submit your own objections](#) on this Leeds portal. Alternatively you can write to Planning Services, Leeds City Council, 9th Floor Merrion House, 110 Merrion Centre, Leeds, LS2 8BB quoting ref: ***“17/02594/OT Land off Racecourse Approach”***.

Working to ensure that the physical character of Wetherby and District is protected and developed for the benefit of the community of both current and future generations.

Recently, Better Wetherby [has written to Leeds City Council](#) requesting that, if all the problems associated with this development are overcome and the application is approved, that conditions should be applied in order that:

- the housing should be carbon neutral, in both build and use
- the shuttle bus should be electric or hydrogen fuelled
- parking for the Young Offenders Institute is provided
- atmospheric and noise pollution for the houses is mitigated
- Better Wetherby should be involved in agreeing plans for the housing

We look forward to receiving a response from Leeds City Council about these key points.

STOCKELD PARK / HARLAND WAY CORRIDOR

In the May newsletter we confirmed that no further legal challenges had been made by Stockeld Park and Hallam Land Management following the February publication of the Inspector's Report refusing their Appeal to be allowed to build 210 new houses. This outcome was a significant achievement for BW, especially as there were many setbacks during the 2-year campaign to stop such an unwelcome development on the boundary with Wetherby.

However, at the [Public Inquiry](#) where BW played such a crucial part, our case was not helped by legitimate criticism levelled by Harrogate's landscape architect that Leeds City Council could have sought a higher level of new tree planting when granting consent to the Bellway's Spofforth Park development. It is imperative that the existing tree belt is strengthened to fully define the countryside limit of Wetherby in this location. We are therefore pressing Leeds Planners to discuss with us the specification and management of Bellway's final planting proposals on the boundary.

The Inquiry process revealed how vulnerable the Harland Way could be to Stockeld Estates ambitions. The high level of pedestrian and cycling activity, especially during the COVID-19 lock down, demonstrates how vital this precious green corridor is, with its rich biodiversity and leisure opportunities.

It is important to be aware that Stockeld Estates, via Persimmon, have not withdrawn their pre-planning proposal to build 100 plus houses off Kings Meadow View in Wetherby. This site reaches up to the boundary of Harland Way, threatens the protected site for Great Crested Newts at Kirk Deighton (see more below) and also endangers the Yellowhammers who have a healthy presence in the hedgerows defining this site. Whilst informal discussion with Leeds Planners indicates that they will recommend refusal should the scheme transfer to being a full planning application, BW will be maintaining a close focus on this issue.

At the Stockeld Park/Hallam Public Inquiry, BW made a robust submission exploring the impact of urban development in this area on the natural drainage through the limestone bedrock. This indicated that the geology of this area leads to a high risk that any new housing development will impact on the Kirk Deighton Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), causing potential [desiccation of the habitat](#) of the Great Crested Newt, a protected species.

The Inspector at the Public Inquiry concurred with BW and Harrogate Borough Council that the new housing proposed by Stockeld Estates, [was detrimental to enjoying the countryside setting](#) of these valuable rights-of-way. It is therefore crucial that we do everything we can to protect the public footpaths and bridleways in this area, ensuring that signage and appropriate usage is maintained.

FUNDING APPEAL

A substantial proportion of our funds were used in connection with paying expert consultants to support BW at the successful Stockeld Park Inquiry. For those that generously contributed, we are most grateful for your support. However, as mentioned in the introduction by the Chair, we need substantial funds in our continuing efforts regarding the proposed development at Racecourse Approach. Please help our efforts to protect your community. If you can assist, please consider making a donation to:

Name: **Better Wetherby Partnership Ltd**
Sort Code: **402312**
Account Number: **22537907**

See this link [Donation Request](#) further information.

BETTER WETHERBY WEBSITE

To keep updated about the work and activities of BW, please visit <https://www.betterwetherby.com/>

CONTACT US

We welcome further volunteers and supporters to assist our efforts. We are currently actively seeking a [Secretary](#) and a Treasurer, these are roles which could possibly be combined and for which we may be able to provide an honorarium.

Please contact us with any comments and queries. If you wish to be included on our mailing list please send a request by email to betterwetherby@gmail.com.

Please feel free to share this newsletter - the more people that are aware of these important issues, the better.